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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 000897

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2013

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SUBJECT: CANADIAN AMBASSADOR TO RAISE OPPOSITION ARRESTS IN  
HAVANA

REF: A. STATE 75175 B. STATE 10182 C. 02 STATE 185884

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Brian Flora for reasons 1.5  
(b) and (d).

1. (C) Post delivered ref A talking points to Kimberly Cowan, Cuba desk officer in DFAIT's Latin America and Caribbean Bureau, on March 24. In a follow-up discussion March 27, Cowan advised poloff that Canada is responding as follows to the arrests of the opposition members. First, Canada has expressed serious concerns about the arrests to representatives of Cuba's mission in Ottawa. Second, Canada's ambassador in Havana will go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 27 and will voice Canada's concerns over the arrests in meetings there. Finally, Canada will express concern about this series of arrests in its country situation statement at CHR-59 in Geneva.

2. (C) Cowan told poloff that Canada's embassy in Havana is closely monitoring the situation, and is seeking to draw out the nature of the charges and to gain a better understanding of why the arrests took place at what would appear to be a particularly sensitive time (during the CHR session in Geneva). (Note: Cowan (protect source) told poloff that one of their embassy's contacts in the Cuban government refers to the arrested persons as "mercenaries" employed by the U.S. government. End note.) Cowan said that Canada would not make a public statement at this time calling for the release of the opposition members. She indicated that Canada is telling the Cuban government privately it considers the arrests a "precipitous and excessive" action.  
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